

# PHAETON PHOENICURUS.



## CHARACTER GENERICUS.

*Rostrum* cultratum, rectum, acuminatum, Fauce  
pone rostrum hiantē.

*Nares* oblongæ.

*Digitus* posticus antrorsum versus.

*Lin. Syst. Nat.* p. 219.

## CHARACTER SPECIFICUS, &c.

PHAETON SUBROSEUS, rostro rectricibusque  
duabus intermediis rubris.

PHAETON ROSEO-INCARNATUS, rostro  
rectricibusque duabus intermediis rubris, tæ-  
nia superciliari pedibusque nigris.

*Lath. ind. orn.* p. 894.

PHAETON PALLIDISSIME ROSEUS, rostro  
rectricibusque duabus intermediis rubris.

*Lin. Syst. Nat. Gmel.* p. 583.

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Quæ in hoc genere continentur aves a natura  
comparatæ ut vitam in mari degant, communiter  
tropicæ vocantur, quod scilicet intra tropicos sem-

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per

per repertæ sint; res nauticis observatoribus notiffima, qui inde conjiciunt se iis appropinquasse. Vagantur tamen nonnullæ, licet rarius, extra hos limites. Has merito dicamus, “ non usitata ferri nec tenui penna,” rapidissimo enim alarum verbere coelum ipsum petentes e conspectu momento surripiuntur, vel ipsis *procellariis* altivolantibus et longivagis audentiores. Descendunt tamen e nubibus in æquor prædæ studio, et velocissime irruentes pisciculos corripunt, quibus præcipue vescuntur. Forma et magnitudine simillimæ sunt inter se variæ Phaetontis species; coloribus præcipue differunt. Quæ communis et notissima est candet argenteum, dorso alisque lunulis nigris brevibus copiose variatis. Species vero, de qua jam loquimur, pallet albido-rosea, sine lunularum istarum nigrantium vestigio. Rectrices duæ intermediæ, cæteris multo longiores, læte sunt phoenicæ seu potius coccinæ. Tropicis omnibus avibus adhuc cognitis macula insignis nigra trans oculos ducitur. Rostrum phaetontis phoenicuri miniatum. Crura nigricant. Rectrices, seu caudæ pennæ longiores totius generis in tropicis multis regionibus magni habentur; et illis in vestibis ornandis utuntur insulas maris Australis incolentes. At in insula *Otabeitee* cum justa solvuntur mortuis, sancte et auguste incedunt sacerdotes principesque ploratores, amictu larva insignito e concha margaritifera, cujus margines plumis de cauda excerptis cinguntur, ut solis radios imitentur. Ova deponere solent hæ aves, bina plerumque, in cavis ad radices arborum, nidum sibi rudem et incompositum e frustulis ligni reliquisque ejusmodi comparantes.





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THE  
RED-TAILED TROPIC-BIRD.



GENERIC CHARACTER.

*Bill* compressed, rather sloping, sharp-pointed.

*Nostrils* pervious.

*Toes* four, all webbed together.

*Tail* cuneiform: the two middle feathers extremely long.

SPECIFIC CHARACTER, &c.

PALE-ROSE-COLOURED PHAETON, with  
the beak and two middle tail-feathers red.

RED-TAILED TROPIC-BIRD.

*Latb. Synopsf.* 3. p. 619.

LE PAILLE EN QUEUE à brins rouges.

*Buff. ois.* 8. p. 357.

PAILLE EN QUEUE de l'Isle de France.

*Pl. enl.* 979.

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The birds of this genus, which are by nature calculated for a marine life, have obtained their common title of Tropic-Birds from being constantly

found within the tropics; a circumstance so generally remarked that it affords one of the most common nautical observations relative to approaching those regions. They are however occasionally seen, though rarely, at some considerable distance beyond the tropics. These birds may well be said to soar "with no middle wing," since their ascent is so uncommonly lofty, and so powerfully rapid, as quickly to raise them beyond human view. Even the Albatrosses, so remarkable for the heights which they attain in the air, and the vast extent of their excursions, cannot equal the daring and exalted flight of these ethereal wanderers. From these elevations they occasionally descend to seek for prey, and darting down with vast velocity, seize on and devour the smaller fish, which form the principal article of their food. Between the different species of Phaeton, which are but few, there is the greatest degree of general similarity of shape and size; and indeed they differ principally in colour: the common tropic-bird being of a beautiful silvery white, thickly traversed on the upper part of the body with short lunulated streaks of black; while the present species is of an extremely pale rose-colour, or rather nearly white with a rose-coloured tinge, and without any of those black streaks which distinguish the former kind. The two middle tail-feathers, which greatly exceed the rest in length, are of a deep and beautiful crimson. In all the tropic-birds yet known there is commonly behind and across each eye a remarkable streak of black. The beak in this species is of a fine red; the legs blackish.

ish. The long feathers of the tail in the birds of this genus are highly esteemed by the natives of many of the tropical regions, and are much used in the ornamental dresses of the natives of the Southern islands. They are particularly conspicuous on the awful and elegant ceremonial habits worn by the priests at Otaheitee, as well as on those of the chief mourners at funerals in that island, which are furnished with a mask or vizer of nacre or mother of pearl shell, surrounded by the tail-feathers of these birds, evidently intended to represent the solar beams, and disposed so as to imitate the diverging rays of that luminary. These birds deposit their eggs, which are generally two in number, in hollows near the roots of trees, in which they form a sort of careless nest with fragments of sticks, &c.